

A Guide for Volunteers



From the commissioner

Welcome to the Texas Department of Human Services. I am excited to have you on board as a volunteer.

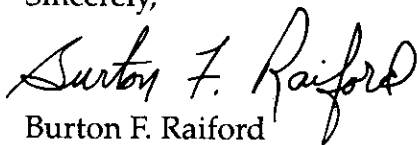
Volunteers are an essential part of the agency. Without volunteer support, people in need often cannot get adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, employment, companionship, medical care, or transportation.

This guide has been prepared to help you have the best possible experience as a volunteer. It answers some of the questions new volunteers frequently ask and gives you some information about the agency, the clients it serves, and your role.

Your supervisor will be able to answer most of your other questions, but please feel free to contact the Volunteer Services office any time you need its assistance.

Thank you for volunteering. I am glad you have chosen to be a member of the DHS team. You are making a difference to Texans in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Burton F. Raiford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Burton" and last name "Raiford" clearly legible.

Burton F. Raiford

Interim Commissioner

Texas Department of Human Services



Texas Department of Human Services

Mission statement

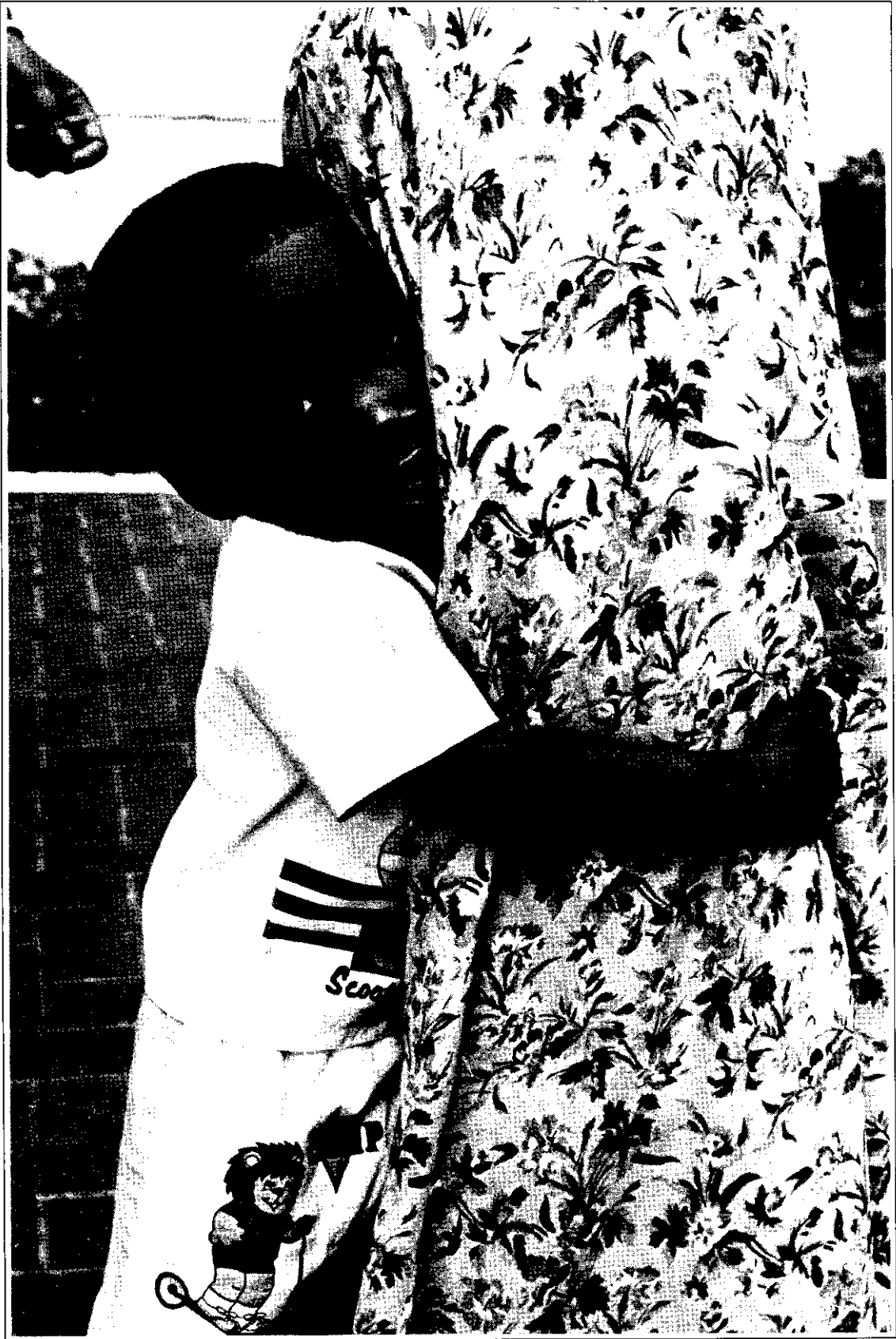
Our mission is to foster the individual's worth, dignity, and family life by:

- providing services to encourage self-sufficiency and long-term independence from public assistance;
- protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation; and
- providing basic support to low-income families.

In partnership with other public and private entities, we will provide these services efficiently and effectively within available resources and legislative provisions.

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What is DHS?

The Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) provides financial, medical, and social services to families and children, elderly people, and people with disabilities. DHS serves more than 2 million people throughout the state. Services are provided by more than 16,000 paid employees, an equal number of volunteers, and thousands of independent agencies that contract with DHS.

The agency was created in 1939 as the Department of Public Welfare. Its name was changed to the Department of Human Resources in 1977 and to the Department of Human Services in 1985 to reflect its increasing scope.

DHS is governed by a six-member volunteer board of directors appointed by the governor for staggered six-year terms.

Who are DHS clients?

DHS clients include:

- low-income families and individuals who need food or medical care,
- children deprived of parental support,
- elderly people who need help to remain independent,
- single parents who need training or support to become self-sufficient,
- people with disabilities who need attendants or adaptive equipment,
- abused or neglected children and their families,
- runaways,
- residents of nursing homes, and
- people left homeless by natural disasters.

Training, educational brochures, videos, and slide/sound shows are available to help you

become familiar with DHS clients and services.

How does DHS help?

Programs and services

DHS programs are grouped into three major administrative areas: Client Self-support Services, Protective Services, and Health Care Services.

Client Self-support Services

Client Self-support Services enables low-income families to become self-sufficient by providing financial assistance to help them meet basic needs and employment and support services to help them achieve economic independence.

■ WINGS, which stands for "Winning Independence, Gaining Success," is a group of programs aimed at giving clients a chance to make it on their own. Services include job training, education, help with job placement, and transitional child care and medical care.

■ The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program gives financial support to families with young children. AFDC recipients and other low-income people receive medical care through the Medicaid program.

■ The Food Stamp program helps low-income families get a nutritionally adequate diet.

■ Nutrition programs provide nutritious meals and snacks to children and elderly and disabled adults through contracts with schools, day-care centers, and other institutions. Food is also distributed to low-income families through the Emergency Food Assistance Program.

Protective Services

Protective Services programs reduce the risk of harm to children and families and promote their well-being.

- The Child Protective Services program investigates reports of child abuse and neglect and provides ongoing services to abused and neglected children and their families.
- The Family Violence program contracts with local shelters to aid victims of domestic violence and their families.
- The Runaways and At-risk Youth program contracts with local programs to provide crisis intervention, counseling, and emergency shelter.
- The Licensing Department regulates child day care, residential children's facilities, and child-placing agencies to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children receiving their services.

Health Care Services

Health Care Services programs provide a broad range of health care assistance to elderly people, people with disabilities, low-income children and their families, pregnant women, and medically needy people. Many of these services are funded through the Medicaid program.

- The Adult Protective Services program intervenes to protect elderly people and people with disabilities from abuse or neglect.
- Community Care for Aged and Disabled programs provide home-delivered meals, in-home health services, adult day care, adult foster care, and other services to help elderly people or people with disabilities remain in their own homes or communities.
- Long Term Care programs provide care in nursing homes and hospitals, home health care, and other medical services.

Regional organization

For administrative purposes, the agency divides the state into 10 geographic regions. A regional administrator manages each region, assisted by a team of program administrators and support staff (see regional map on Page 11). Services are coordinated through the state office in Austin.

Volunteer Services at the state office coordinates the volunteer program, providing support and consultation to regional staff. A regional volunteer specialist coordinates the volunteer program in each region. Many regions also have program volunteer coordinators. Your supervisor can identify the volunteer coordinator for your area and give you a list of other key people for your region or program area.

How can volunteers help?

DHS is a diverse organization and needs volunteers with a wide variety of interests, talents, skills, and ideas. Volunteers can work independently, with a small team of staff and volunteers, or face to face with individual clients. Each volunteer plays an important role. As a volunteer, you might help by:

- teaching a teen mother how to dress professionally and interview for jobs,
- delivering a hot meal to an elderly person,
- collecting toys for kids in a shelter for abused children,
- entering data on a computer,
- teaching self-esteem to young children while their mothers attend a job skills workshop,
- placing a weekly call to an elderly person who lives alone,
- stocking an emergency food pantry,

- maintaining a data base of community resources,
- repairing or adapting a disabled person's home,
- taking a young mother and her sick infant to a doctor or clinic, or
- giving foster parents a break by taking care of foster children for a weekend.



What can volunteers expect?

As a volunteer, you perform many of the same tasks as paid staff and are held accountable for your work in the same way. In return, you can expect adequate supervision and training, a positive teamwork approach, equipment and supplies necessary to complete assigned tasks, and reimbursement for travel expenses when possible.

Supervision

You can expect to have one supervisor to guide and support you in your work. According to agency policy, every volunteer working directly with DHS must be supervised by a staff person or designated volunteer who has at least the same level of job responsibility as that volunteer.

Although you may work with many people, your supervisor should be clearly identified. Your supervisor is your main contact and is responsible for:

- making sure you get adequate training, guidance, and instruction;
- evaluating your performance;

- notifying you of changes in staff, policy, or procedures; and
- giving you feedback.

If you have a problem with your job, discuss it with your supervisor immediately so you can work together to try to reach a reasonable solution. Be honest about the problem or situation, and make sure you and your supervisor understand what is expected.

Your supervisor will record and report your work hours and other pertinent personnel information. You may be asked to help keep records.

Orientation

On your first day on the job, your supervisor should discuss the following items with you:

- job description, duties, goals, and expectations;
- a description of the program area where you will work;
- starting date, time, and duration of your placement;
- schedule and time commitments;



library has videotapes on programs, human services issues, data security, volunteering, office safety, and other subjects. If funds are available, DHS may pay for additional training.

Evaluation

Your job performance will be evaluated regularly. Depending on the scope and complexity of your job, the evaluations may be formal or informal, written or oral. You may request a written evaluation for

- location of your work space;
- procedures for obtaining needed supplies;
- location of parking, restrooms, water fountains, and snack and coffee machines;
- lunch and break schedules;
- places for your personal items such as purse and coat; and
- holiday schedule.

You may be scheduled for the formal orientation to the agency that is given to all new DHS employees. Feel free to discuss any of the items in this booklet with your supervisor.

Training

You will be given an overview of the program area where you will be working, as well as formal or on-the-job training to perform your job effectively. Tutorials and formal training on computers may also be provided. Each regional training center and

use in job applications.

You may be asked to complete an evaluation of DHS and your assignment after you have been working for six months or when you leave. Some volunteer supervisors may be providing supervision for the first time, and they will appreciate the feedback you can give them. Communicate clearly and frequently with your supervisor. Discuss any successes, difficulties, suggestions, or questions you have.

Computer access

If you need to use the DHS computer system to perform your job, you will obtain security access through the same channels as paid staff. All paid and volunteer staff using computers must sign the Computer Security Agreement Form 4014. You may not use another person's sign-on or share your sign-on with anyone.

Note: Volunteers who receive DHS benefits or have close relatives receiving benefits will

not be given the capability to update records relating to the benefits they or their relatives receive.

Reimbursement of expenses

If funds are available, you may be reimbursed for travel and other expenses at the current state rate. To be eligible for reimbursement, you must obtain a Personal Identification Number (PIN) by submitting Form 4109.

After obtaining a PIN, you must submit Purchase Voucher Form 4116 to request reimbursement. Attach copies of receipts for expenses being claimed to Form 4116. Your supervisor can get the forms for you and help you complete them.

The description on Form 4116 should be written as follows: "Reimbursement to volunteer for (travel, per diem, etc.) to provide services to DHS recipients under _____ program and program code _____." Two signatures of DHS staff are required on Form 4116 for verification that services have been rendered.

Some expenses incurred by volunteers can be claimed as income tax deductions. Call your local Internal Revenue Service office for more information.

Identification

For clients' security as well as your own, it is recommended that you carry a photo I.D. card, Form 4793, when working directly with clients. You can get an I.D. card from your volunteer coordinator or regional volunteer specialist.

DHS also provides volunteer name tags. Although wearing a name tag is optional, it will help staff, clients, and other volunteers identify and recognize you.

What rights do volunteers have?

Volunteers are considered non-paid staff and in general have the same rights as employees. Following is a summary of your basic rights as a volunteer. The Administrative Handbook Section 9600 details volunteers' rights. You can also consult your volunteer coordinator for more information.

Civil rights

Staff must recruit and place volunteers without regard to age, race, sex, religion, color, national origin, or disability. If you feel you have been discriminated against by DHS staff, you should first consult your supervisor and, if necessary, your supervisor's manager.

If you cannot resolve the problem informally with your supervisor or your supervisor's manager, contact your volunteer coordinator. Your regional volunteer specialist can also assist you. If necessary, you may contact Volunteer Services at state office.

You have the right to request a hearing with the DHS civil rights office on discrimination issues. You also have the right to file a complaint about any work-related problem.

Immunity and liability

Volunteers serving in charitable organizations are immune from civil liability for good faith actions taken in the course and scope of their service, according to Chapter 84, Civil Practice and Remedies Code. However, since DHS is not considered a charitable organization under this law, volunteers working directly with DHS may not be covered.

If you were referred to DHS by a charitable organization, such as the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), you may qualify

for immunity from civil liability through that organization. But in the event of a lawsuit, you may still be responsible for arranging your own legal representation.

Because volunteers are not paid state employees, they are not entitled to indemnification or attorney general representation in the event of a job-related lawsuit (Chapter 104, Civil Practice and Remedies Code). If you provide direct services to clients, have access to confidential information, or are exposed to hazardous conditions, you should consider purchasing legal protection insurance.

Available to volunteers at a nominal rate, legal protection insurance provides legal representation and advice on work-related and personal matters. Ask your supervisor for more information about the legal protection plan or call 1-800-252-9346. You must enroll within 30 days of the date you registered as a volunteer.

Requesting references

You may ask your supervisor to write a letter of reference for you. The letter must be presented to you. DHS staff are prohibited from releasing letters of reference or any information on the job performance of volunteers or paid staff directly to people outside the agency. Your supervisor also must give you a copy of any performance evaluation. You are free to use performance evaluations as a record of effectiveness on the job.

What does DHS expect from volunteers?

As a volunteer, you are expected to:

- make a positive contribution to the DHS mission,
- adhere to confidentiality requirements,

■ observe DHS policies and standards of behavior, and

■ communicate with supervisors and staff.

Confidentiality

All information collected about the identities of applicants, clients, and families under investigation is confidential under state and federal laws. Confidentiality laws help protect people from exploitation, discrimination, and embarrassment.

Registration

All volunteers who work under the supervision of DHS staff must complete a Volunteer Registration Form 4792. This form gives staff information on your skills, interests, and availability. By signing the form, you agree to adhere to confidentiality policies and laws.

Reference checks

Staff are required to check references on all volunteers who work with clients or confidential information, or who have computer security access. Please advise your references that they may receive a call or letter from DHS staff.

Criminal history checks

DHS is required to request criminal history checks on all volunteers who work directly with children in Child Protective Services or the Licensing Department. DHS is not authorized to request criminal history checks on volunteers in other program areas. However, all volunteers are required to report certain criminal history information on the Volunteer Registration Form 4792 (Question 13). Staff are required to keep that and other personal information about volunteers confidential.

Group involvement

More than 700 organizations across the state are involved in projects and partnerships with DHS, including businesses, churches, civic groups, schools, and community organizations. An organization working on a DHS project need not register each member of the group on a Volunteer Registration Form 4792. However, if client information is to be shared with the group, every volunteer must be notified of confidentiality requirements and agree to adhere to those requirements.



Transportation responsibilities

In most regions, volunteers are responsible for securing their own transportation to and from their assignments. Staff may be able to help by providing information about public transportation or car pools.

If you provide transportation for DHS clients, you must have a valid driver's license and be properly insured for personal liability and property damage. You also must complete all parts of Question 8 (information on insurance, vehicle, and driving record) of the Volunteer Registration Form 4792. RSVP provides auto liability insurance for registered volunteers age 60 and older. Other volunteers are covered only by their personal insurance.

Any vehicle used for transporting clients must have a valid inspection sticker, a valid

license plate, and seat belts. If you transport small children, they must be secured in safety seats as required by law. Check with your supervisor to find out if a safety seat will be needed. If safety seats are required and not available, work with your supervisor to make alternative arrangements. For safety reasons, vehicles should be locked at all times.

Safety guidelines

If you observe unsafe equipment, conditions, or actions, remove yourself from the situation immediately and notify your supervisor. Never jeopardize your own safety or the safety of clients. Exercise caution when using office equipment, lifting and carrying objects, negotiating doorways and stairs, opening file drawers, handling hot liquids, and visiting homes. Proper safety



techniques can prevent many accidents. More information on safety is detailed in the Employee Safety Program Guide, which you can get from your supervisor.

Accident reports

If an accident occurs, call for medical assistance if needed and notify your supervisor immediately. Everyone involved in the accident must complete the Accident Report Form 4738 within three working days. If anyone involved is physically unable to complete the form, someone else may complete the form for that person. Your supervisor should notify the office, regional, or department safety officer.

As a volunteer, you are not covered by worker's compensation insurance. The State Tort Claims Act may cover medical expenses you incur as a result of an on-the-job accident.

Attendance policy

Your supervisor, co-workers, and clients value your work, and they depend on you to be at work at the scheduled time. If you know

you will be absent or late, notify your supervisor as soon as possible so that alternative plans can be made.

Smoking policy

Within most DHS buildings, smoking is allowed only in designated areas, which your supervisor can identify. Smoking is prohibited throughout some buildings.

Personal use of state property

Using state-owned property, such as DHS files,

computers, equipment, or supplies, for personal business is a violation of state law.

Brief local telephone calls are allowed. Ask your supervisor which telephone will be available for your use. You may want to give family members or others who may need to reach you that telephone number and your supervisor's number. Personal long distance calls at state expense are not permitted. Local office procedures determine whether you may use a personal credit card or third-party billing to charge long distance calls.

Personal appearance

Dress safely, comfortably, and appropriately for your work assignment. Exercise good judgement and care in personal grooming.

Completing a volunteer assignment

Let your supervisor know as soon as possible if you cannot complete your volunteer assignment. If you have completed your job

and would like to continue volunteering with DHS, you may discuss other options with your supervisor or ask about other volunteer opportunities through your program or regional volunteer coordinator.

Where can volunteers find more information?

For more information about volunteering at DHS, talk to your supervisor, volunteer coordinator, or regional volunteer specialist. You might also consult the DHS Human Resource Services handbook, program handbooks, other program materials, and the *Volunteer Management Handbook for DHS Staff*.

What do all the letters and numbers mean?

A glossary of terms and acronyms

A&D - Services for the Aged and Disabled .

adult foster care - care provided to elderly people and adults with disabilities in a home-like setting.

advisory committees or councils - committees or councils mandated by state law or federal regulations or established by agency programs to advise and assist the Texas Board of Human Services and staff on issues and services.

AFDC - Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

AFDC-UP - Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Unemployed Parent. Cash assistance for two-parent families who are in need because the principal wage earner is unemployed. (See WINGS.)

APS - Adult Protective Services.

ATP - authorization to participate (in the Food Stamp program).

BJN - budgeted job number.

CANRIS - Child Abuse and Neglect Report and Inquiry System.

CCAD - Community Care for the Aged and Disabled.

CCMS - Child Care Management Services.

CPA - child-placing agency.

CPS - Child Protective Services.

CSS - Client Self-support Services.

DAHS - Day Activities and Health Services.

DCL - Day Care Licensing.

ENTERP - Emergency Nutrition and Temporary Emergency Relief Program.

EOB - explanation of benefits (medical).

EPSDT - Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment.

fair hearing - an appeal opportunity for an applicant or client who disagrees with or wishes to appeal an action taken on the client's case.

fiscal year (FY) - annual period for which funds are appropriated. The state of Texas fiscal year is from Sept. 1 through Aug. 31. The federal government's fiscal year is from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30.

FSP - Food Stamp program.

FVP - Family Violence program.

HCFA - Health Care Financing Administration. The division of federal government that regulates Medicaid and Medicare.



LAR - legislative appropriations request.

LBB - Legislative Budget Board.

long-term community care - another term for the Community Care for Aged and Disabled (CCAD) program.

MAO - medical assistance only.

ME - medical eligibility.

Medicaid (Title 19) - A state administered, federally and state funded program to provide medical assistance to eligible clients.

HEAP - Home Energy Assistance Program (also known as LIHEAP - Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program).

HHS - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

HUD - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

IA - income assistance. Financial assistance programs and services, including Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, the Home Energy Assistance Program, and disaster assistance.

ICF - intermediate care facility. A nursing facility licensed and certified by the Texas Department of Health that gives medical and nursing care to clients who meet the criteria for intermediate level of care.

I&R - information and referral.

JOBS - Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training program. (See WINGS.)

Medicare (Title 18) - a federally administered and funded medical insurance program for people 65 years and older and some disabled people.

mentoring - an independent program in which volunteers serve as role models for young parents in the JOBS program who are seeking self-sufficiency.

MHMR - Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation.

minimum standards - licensing requirements to be met by child-care facilities and child-placing agencies subject to DHS regulation.

NHIC - National Heritage Insurance Company. The DHS contractor that processes Medicaid claims.

operating plan - an annual plan for DHS that includes budget information and program descriptions. The plan is approved

each year by the Texas Board of Human Services.

PAL - Preparation for Adult Living. A program to prepare teen-agers in foster care for adult living.

QC - quality control.

RA - regional administrator.

RCCL - residential child-care licensing.

RFH - registered family home.

RVS - regional volunteer specialist.

SAVERR - System of Application, Verification, Eligibility, Referral, and Reporting.

SSA - Social Security Administration.

SSI - Supplemental Security Income.

SSMS - Social Services Management System.

STS or TEX-AN - state-wide long-distance telephone service for use by state agencies.

TDH - Texas Department of Health.

TEC - Texas Employment Commission.

Tel-assistance - reductions in basic telephone rates for elderly people and people with disabilities.

TFC - Texas Family Code.

TYC - Texas Youth Commission.

USDA - United States

Department of Agriculture.

volunteer coordinator - the staff person who organizes and directs the volunteer and community resources program for a region, program, geographical area, or unit.

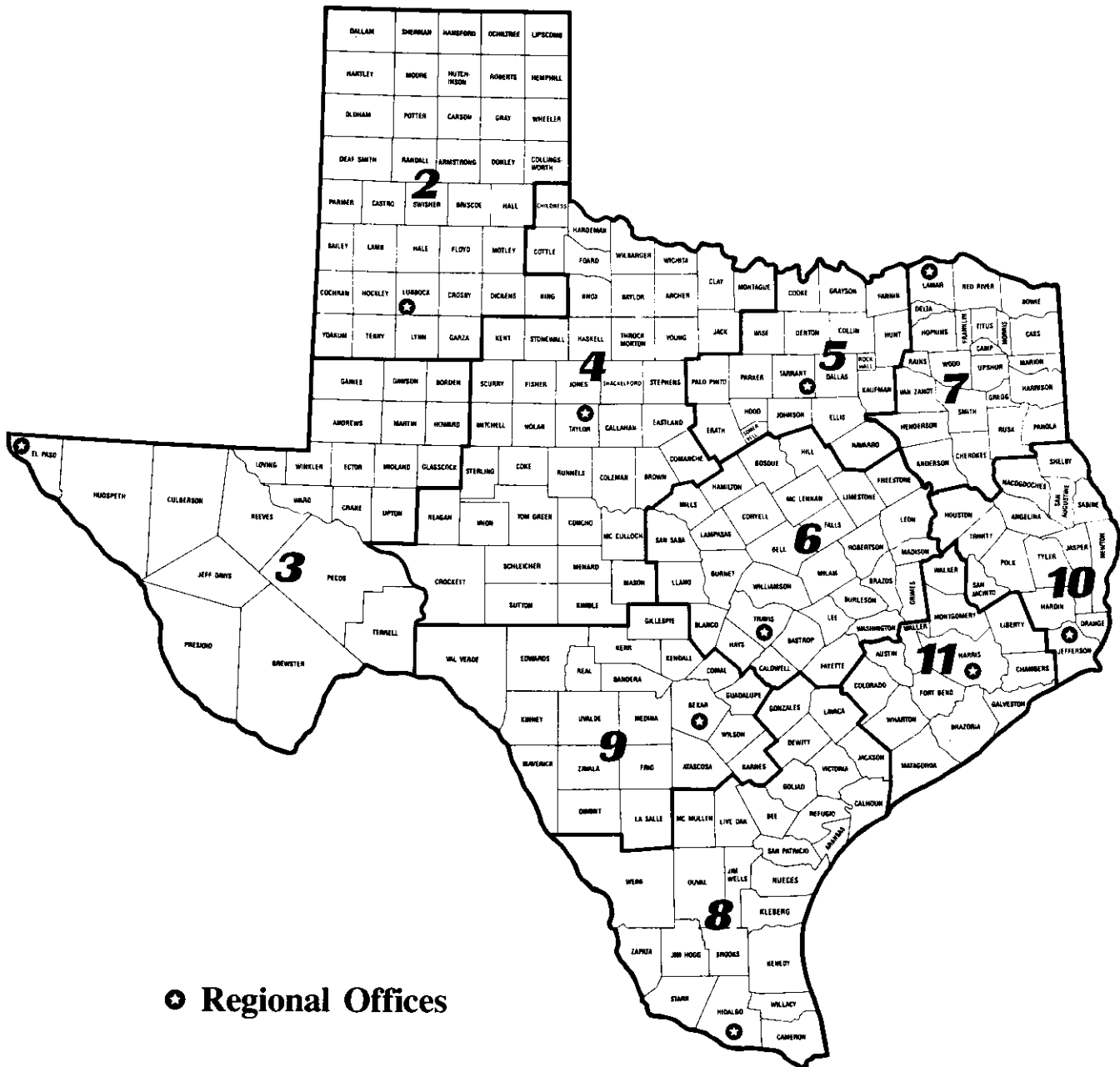
Volunteer Services - the central office that coordinates volunteer and community resource activities for the state.

Wenet - statewide computer network for financial services.

WINGS - Winning Independence, Gaining Success. WINGS refers to a group of programs designed to help clients become self-sufficient, including JOBS, AFDC-UP, transitional child-care, and transitional Medicaid programs.



DHS regional boundaries



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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.



*Melody Bashaw and Jose Jover,
winners of the 1990 DHS
Volunteer Service Awards, show
that people are never too
young— or too old— to be
volunteers.*

Texas Department of Human Services
August 1991